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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2008

In Today's Papers

President Gul Meets With Opposition Leaders to Defuse Tensions  
All papers report President Abdullah Gul met Thursday with opposition leaders Deniz Baykal (CHP), Devlet Bahceli (MHP), and Muhsin Yazicioglu (BBP) at the presidential palace. Papers report the rising domestic political tensions and the AKP closure lawsuit were not discussed at the meetings. Instead, the talks focused on foreign policy and security. After the meetings, Gul issued a call to defuse political tensions at home. Mainstream Vatan writes on its front page, "Gul warned that the U.S. was preparing to withdraw its troops out of Iraq," and that "Turkey's domestic political tensions should not be allowed to undermine the fight against terrorism." Gul emphasized, "We should not deviate from stability and democracy," he noted. Mainstream Milliyet columnist Fikret Bila writes, "Gul sent a message to politicians by warning them to avoid chaos."

CHP Leader Deniz Baykal told reporters that, during his meeting with President Gul, they discussed security and foreign policy matters. "We discussed the Turkish military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's visit, U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney's visit, and the Nevruz incidents," said Baykal.

Taraf Correspondent Taken Into Custody for Violating Ergenekon Reporting Ban  
Leftist Taraf writes on page one Soner Arikanoğlu, the Taraf correspondent who reported March 24 Ergenekon planned to attack the Court of Appeals (Yargıtay), was taken into custody within the scope of the investigation into the organization. Taraf also reports on page one that during raids on Workers' Party (IP,) police found detailed security plans for the military General Staff (TGS) Chief Yasar Buyukanit during his visits to the Aegean cities of Izmir and Balıkesir in 2005. The paper claims General Buyukanit, too, was a target of the Ergenekon underground terrorist network.

More than 30 people have been charged in the investigation into the

Ergenekon network. Allegations against the group include engineering a coup against the ruling AKP government in 2009. Among those detained were Dogu Perincek, head of the Labor Party, former rector of Istanbul University Kemal Alemdaroglu, and editor of the left-leaning and nationalist Cumhuriyet daily Ilhan Selcuk. Alemdaroglu and Selcuk were released a few days after they were detained. Neither was charged with a crime. Ergenekon was suspected of being behind two bombings on the Cumhuriyet offices in Istanbul last year. Turkish press has reported the gang was also behind the assassination of Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink.

#### Constitutional Court President Calls for Moderation on AKP Closure Case

Sabah, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others: Mainstream Milliyet reports that regarding the AKP closure case, Constitutional Court President Hasim Kilic said "everyone should review their responsibilities. The rise in tensions will not serve for the advantage of anyone. We should fulfill the responsibility of living together. I do not have any concerns as long as the institutions work. Problems will be solved within the framework of laws." Mainstreams Sabah and Vatan report Osman Can, Constitutional Court Reporter, submitted his recommendation regarding the AKP closure case to the Court of Appeals Chief Prosecutor Thursday. Vatan says the Constitutional Court will either accept or reject the indictment on Monday. Liberal Radikal reports that the preliminary assessment of the report will be made on Monday. Sabah columnist Emre Akoz says in his column that "the AKP should use all political and judicial ways to prevent the closure of the party and that everyone who cares about the unity and stability of the country should support them." Milliyet columnist Hasan Cemal says "the AKP closure case is the last hoop in the chain of developments against democracy

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since the 2002 elections. Who ever took part in the 'judicial coup' is also responsible for the regime crisis."

Meanwhile, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports that Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) chairperson Arzuhan Dogan Yalcindag continues efforts to ease the tension in the country. Within this framework, she paid a visit to Parliament Speaker Koksak Toptan for "the call for common sense in Turkey." Later she visited Revolutionary Labor Unions Confederation (DISK) chairman Suleyman Celebi with the same purposes.

#### General Buyukanit in Cyprus

Milliyet, Sabah, Hurriyet, Yeni Safak, Vatan, Bugun and others: On the second day of his visit to Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Chief of Turkish General Staff (TGS) General Buyukanit visited a Mehmetcik village in the Karpas region of the TRNC and said that the isolation of Turkish Cypriots is an atrocity. Meanwhile, Sabah reports a street in northern Cyprus was named after Buyukanit.

#### Editorial Commentary on AKP Closure Case

In Islamist-leaning Yeni Safak, Yasin Dogan wrote (3/28): "An elitist group in this country wants to rule on its own and provoke a crisis based on the values only they defend. In the midst of these efforts, the will of the people is ignored and democracy is set aside. Certain movements are thrown out via anti-democratic means. All of this makes it impossible for a contemporary political debate to occur on democratic platforms."

Ismet Berkan wrote in liberal Radikal (3/28): "The AKP stands at a crossroads. The party can either try to prevent its closure case by amending the Constitution, which may lead to a referendum. However, a referendum will cause domestic tensions to peak. If the AKP continues to focus on preparing its defense in its closure case, domestic tensions will not be as high. It is not likely that the AKP will do this. But a long term strategy that demonstrates sincerity and commitment to secular values will only boost the AKP's credit. Even if the court process leads to closure, the AKP will be the winner in the long-term."

In mainstream Hurriyet, Ertugrul Ozkok wrote (3/28): "Everybody

makes calls for compromise and reconciliation. There are some basic principles on which we can and we should reconcile. First of all, we should all agree on the fundamental and unchangeable values of Turkish Republic. In particular, we should not try to redefine secularism. Second, we should agree on the fact that winning a narrow majority of votes does not necessarily mean one can impose his own mandate; democracy also represents the views of the minority. Thirdly, we should dispose of favoritism based on religious inclinations exhibited by public appointments."

In Turkish Daily News, Mehmet Ali Birand advised (3/28): "If the government had taken enough care to promote relations with the EU and had achieved the reforms as required, Turkey would not have plunged into chaos because of the turban. In addition, the Turkish public would not have developed such a suspicious attitude towards the AKP. Let's not forget that full EU membership is the best possible guarantee of the secular system. EU values are the most important guarantee for religious freedom, as well as personal freedoms. We are about to lose the anchor that is Europe. Let's hope the prime minister realizes what this means."

TV News:  
NTV

#### Domestic News

- Pro-Kurdish DTP leader Nurettin Demirtas appeared before the court in connection with comments he made during a Roj TV program.

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- Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir has been acquitted in a case for preparing Kurdish-language posters.

- Members of the Turkish Parliament welcome the calls issued by NGOs for defusing tensions in the public.

#### International News

- Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat said Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias gave the impression that he wants settlement on the divided island.

- President Bush will visit Moscow to discuss the controversial missile defense shield with Russian President Putin.

- Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said some allies were expected to announce decisions for sending additional troops to Afghanistan at the NATO meeting in Romania next week.

WILSON